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STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

"THOU SHALT NOT KILL"

BY

THEODORE A. NIST

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Theodore A. Nist

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ABSTRACT

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This research paper examines the pacifist impulses in the teachings of Jesus Christ, Mohandas (Mahatma) Gandhi, and Bertrand Russell as paradigms for consideration by strategic leaders in deciding when, and under what conditions, military force may be justified. Each position is analyzed critically, with the conclusion that it is ethical to engage in war under some circumstances, such as defense against an external attack.

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"Thou shalt not kill."

So, according to the Bible, are we all commanded by God, as revealed to Moses in Exodus 20:13 and Deuteronomy 5:17.

What is the effect of this commandment upon those who serve in the military, or upon those who serve in other capacities in the federal government which consider the use of military power? Is killing in the name of the state defensible? If so, under what circumstances?

In this paper I consider pacifism as a policy of national security. I begin by defining pacifism, and then consider two schools of pacifist philosophy. The first is based upon the precepts of Christianity, the second on principles of nonviolence espoused by Mohandas Gandhi. I consider the political philosophy of Bertrand Russell, who has often been identified with pacifism (although, as I will show, Russell was not, strictly speaking, a pacifist). I then review just war theory, discuss my personal views of state-sponsored violence, and close with a lesson from Shakespeare.

I. What is Pacifism?

For the purpose of this paper, pacifism is defined as opposition to all violence, including killing. This sometimes is referred to as "universal pacifism." As one philosopher has

noted, "while virtually everyone believes there is a strong moral presumption against the violence and killing in war, pacifists differ from most of us in their belief that this presumption cannot be overridden, that the challenge to provide a moral justification for war can never be met."

It is important to observe at the outset that one's views about the use of violence in war are affected by, and may even depend upon, one's attitude toward violence in private affairs, since state action can be seen as collective behavior. Certain wars can, for example, be viewed as collective self-defense.

II. Christian Pacifism

A. Biblical Interpretation

The commandment "thou shalt not kill," cited above, is thought by some to require pacifism of all Christians. The justification is said to lie in the words themselves, which seem clear and direct. This argument, however, is subject to serious criticism. Many scholars believe that the original Hebrew word, "ratsach," is more properly translated as "murder." According to this argument, the proper translation of this commandment should be "thou shalt not commit murder," rather than "thou shalt not kill." This wording has, in fact, been used in some modern

English translations, including the New American Bible. If this translation is correct, then the commandment would not proscribe all killing, but only killing that constitutes murder.

Furthermore, there are a number of instances in the Bible where killing seems not only to be permitted, but even required. For example, Leviticus 24:16 says: "he that blasphemeth the name of the Lord, he shall surely be put to death;" the following verse adds: "and he that killeth any man shall surely be put to death." These appear to be general commandments.

Some Christians point to the Sermon on the Mount to justify pacifism. In this passage (Matthew 5:38-45), Jesus said:

Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth:

But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also.

And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also.

And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain.

Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not away.

Ye have heard that it had been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbor, and hate thine enemy.

But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;

That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.

This passage doesn't necessarily preclude violence in all cases. In response to this passage, one Army officer has observed:

If struck in one cheek, we are to turn the other, thus giving the aggressor an opportunity to desist, avoiding a fight. But, if he does not desist and renews the attack, nothing is said about <u>again</u> turning the other cheek (emphasis supplied).⁴

B. Hauerwas's Church of Peace

Stanley Hauerwas, a Methodist theologian, believes that

Christianity requires pacifism. His basis for this belief is

Jesus's suffering on the cross, which, in his view, requires

Christ's followers also to suffer in the face of evil. Hauerwas

observes:

[Christ's] nonresistance, including the refusal to use political means of self-defense, found its ultimate revelation in the uncomplaining and forgiving death of the innocent at the hands of the guilty. This death reveals how God deals with evil; here is the only valid starting point for Christian pacifism or non-resistance.⁵

Hauerwas believes that Christ's resurrection occasioned an ontological change - a change in the very nature of existence - which requires this response. He cites the following observation of John Howard Yoder, who observed that Jesus gave his followers a new way to live:

He gave them a way to deal with offenders - by forgiving them. He gave them a new way to deal with violence - by suffering. He gave them a new way to deal with money - by

sharing it. He gave them a new way to deal with problems of leadership - by drawing upon the gift of every member, even the most humble. He gave them a new way to deal with a corrupt society - by building a new order, not smashing the old. He gave them a new pattern of relationships between man and woman, between parent and child, between master and slave, in which was made concrete a radical new vision of what it means to be a human person. He gave them a new attitude toward the state and toward the "enemy nation." 6

Nonviolence, in the view of Hauerwas and Yoder, is one of the things that is essential to being a Christian. Pacifism is not so much a "position" as a way of life. It denotes a set of convictions and practices of a particular kind of people, i.e., Christians. As such, it can't be presented as an alternative to doctrines, such as the "just war" doctrine, which attempt to justify the use of violence in certain situations (just war theory is discussed in section V of this paper). Hauerwas says "that is simply not how Christian pacifism, which is Christologically and eschatologically determined, works."

Hauerwas argues that war is in fact the desire "to be rid of God, to claim for ourselves the power to determine our meaning and destiny." Our desire to protect ourselves from our enemies, to eliminate our enemies in the name of protecting the common history we share with our friends, says Hauerwas, is "the manifestation of our hatred of God." Christians, he continues, have been offered the possibility of a different history, through

participation in a community in which one learns to love the enemy. Christians are, in his view, a people who believe that God will enable them to exist without the necessity of war.

From this perspective, Hauerwas concludes, the question "Should war be eliminated?" is a false question - not because war can't be eliminated, or because it has moral viability, but because war already has been eliminated for Christians, whom, he says, "offer ... a witness to God's invitation to join a community that ... gives us the means to resist the temptation to give our loyalties to those that would use them for war." Christians, he says, "do not choose nonviolence because we believe that through nonviolence we can rid the world of war, but rather in a world of war we cannot be anything but nonviolent as worshipful followers of Jesus the Christ."

III. Gandhian Pacifism

A. The Philosophy of Gandhi

Mohandas (Mahatma) Gandhi, the preeminent Indian nationalist leader, articulated a non-Christian philosophy of pacifism.

Gandhi was Hindu, but his philosophy is not specific to that religion. Gandhi's philosophy of nonviolence is based on the concepts of "satyagraha" and "ahimsa."

"Satyagraha" is a term that Gandhi coined while he was living in South Africa. He explained it as follows:

Its root meaning is holding on to truth, hence truth-force. I have also called it love-force or soul-force. In the application of satyagraha, I discovered in the earliest stages that pursuit of truth did not admit of violence being inflicted on one's opponent, but that he must be weaned from error by patience and sympathy ... and patience means self-suffering. So the doctrine came to mean vindication of truth not by infliction of suffering on the opponent, but on one's self." 12

Gandhi said: "Truth is my God. Nonviolence is the means of realizing Him." 13

Means were vitally important to Gandhi. He said that "means ... are everything. As the means, so the end.... If we take care of the means, we are bound to reach the end sooner or later." 14

"Ahimsa" is Gandhi's word for nonviolence. He thought nonviolence was essential to human nature, corresponding to our innate desire for peace, justice, order, freedom, and personal dignity. This concept is based upon Gandhi's belief that human nature, in its essence, is unified.

The idea of humankind as a single community is essential to Gandhi's philosophy. He said that "my goal is friendship with the entire world." It is, Gandhi said, necessary to extend friendship across international frontiers. After all, he said, "God never made those frontiers." The "golden way," he said,

is "to be friends with the world, and to regard the whole human family as one." At the time of the Second World War, he said:

I do not think that the Germans as a nation are any worse than the English, or the Italians are any worse. We are all tarred with the same brush; we are all members of the vast human family. I decline to draw any distinctions. I cannot claim any superiority for Indians. We have the same virtues and the same vices.... I can keep India intact and its freedom also intact only if I have goodwill towards the whole of the human family, and not merely for the human family which inhabits this little spot of the earth called India. It is big enough compared to other nations, but what is India in the wide world or in the universe?¹⁸

Gandhi believed that war is caused largely by greed and the desire of states to exploit weaker countries. "If there were no greed," he observed, "there would be no occasion for armaments. The principle of nonviolence necessitates complete abstention from exploitation in any form." He added that "if the recognized leaders of mankind who have control over the engines of destruction were wholly to renounce their use, with full knowledge of its implications, permanent peace can be obtained. This is clearly impossible without the Great Powers of the earth renouncing their imperialistic design." Following the Second World War, he said:

It was a war of aggrandizement, as I have understood, on either part. It was a war for dividing the spoils of the exploitation of weaker races - otherwise euphemistically called the world commerce.²¹

Gandhi considered what a society should do if it is attacked. There are two possible types of nonviolent response, he said. The first would be to give up possession of territory, but not to cooperate with the invader. The second would be nonviolent resistance by people who have been properly trained. They would, he said, "offer themselves unarmed as fodder for the aggressor's cannon." Gandhi's underlying belief is that even the worst aggressor has a heart. "The unexpected spectacle of endless rows upon rows of men and women simply dying rather than surrender to the will of an aggressor," said Gandhi, "must ultimately melt him and his soldiery." 22

B. Gandhi's Influence on Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Gandhi's philosophy had a great impact upon the thinking of Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr., who adopted Gandhian tactics in his struggle for civil rights. Like Gandhi, King believed that all of humanity should be a "beloved community." Like Gandhi, King believed that violence within this community was immoral; he also believed that it would be counterproductive:

Violence ... is both impractical and immoral. It is impractical because it is a descending spiral ending in destruction for all. The old law of an eye for an eye leaves everybody blind. It is immoral because it seeks to humiliate the opponent, rather than win his understanding. Violence is immoral because it thrives on hatred, rather than love. It destroys community, and makes brotherhood

impossible... It creates bitterness in the survivors, and brutality in the destroyers. 24

IV. The "Pacifist" Philosophy of Bertrand Russell

Bertrand Russell, one of the preeminent philosophers of the twentieth century, is commonly thought to have been a pacifist. He was famous for his opposition to the First World War, and in fact was dismissed from his position at Trinity College at Cambridge University for his antiwar activities. Late in his life, he was a vocal advocate of nuclear disarmament. He was jailed twice - for six months in 1918 as the result of an allegedly libelous article which he had written for a pacifist journal, and then again in 1961 (at age 89!) for one week, in connection with his campaign for nuclear disarmament.

Early in his life, Russell had supported British imperialism, including the Boer War in South Africa. In his autobiography, Russell describes a moment in 1901 (when he was 29 years of age) when he had a quasi-religious experience which dramatically changed his life. He was staying with the family of Albert North Whitehead at the time. Mrs. Whitehead was very ill. When he came home one night,

...we found Mrs. Whitehead undergoing an unusually severe bout of pain. She seemed cut off from everyone and everything by walls of agony, and the sense of the solitude of each human soul suddenly overwhelmed me...Within five minutes I went through some such reflections as the

following: the loneliness of the human soul is unendurable; nothing can penetrate it except the highest intensity of the sort of love that religious teachers have preached; whatever does not spring from this motive is harmful, or at best useless; it follows that war is wrong,...that the use of force is to be deprecated, and that in human relations one should penetrate to the core of loneliness in each person and speak to that.²⁵

At the end of these five minutes, Russell says, he had become a totally different person; "having been an imperialist, I became during those five minutes a pro-Boer and a pacifist." 26

really a pacifist, as I defined the term earlier in this paper. That is to say, he did not oppose the use of violence by the state in all situations. In a television interview in 1959, Russell said that he believed it was reasonable to say that some wars were just, with the caveat that "of course, you have to define what you mean by 'just'."²⁷ He continued, "you could mean, on the one hand, wars which have a good legal justification, and certainly there have been quite a number of wars where one side had a very good justification. Or you could mean wars which are likely to do good, rather than harm, and that isn't at all the same classification. Not at all."²⁸ "I don't think that every war which has a legal justification has to be fought," he added.²⁹

When he was pressed on which wars he thought were justified, Russell replied that he believed that any resistance to aggression or invasion would be just. For example, he said, the English were just in resisting the Spanish Armada. As for other wars, he went on, "I'd never have taken the view that all wars were just, or all wars were unjust. Never. I felt some were justified, and some were not, and I thought that the Second World War was justified, but the First I thought was not." 30

Russell said that he had watched with growing anxiety the policies of all of the European Great Powers in the years before 1914, and he was unable to accept the "superficial, melodramatic" explanations of the conflict which were offered by the governments. He didn't believe that that particular conflict, under the particular circumstances, justified the lost of life, pain and misery, and the lying of the parties involved in the conflict. "The Kaiser's government," he said, "wasn't all that bad." 31

In comparison, he believed that World War II was justified, because "I thought Hitler was utterly intolerable. The whole Nazi outlook was absolutely dreadful, and I thought that if the Nazis conquered the world, as they obviously intended to do if

they could, the whole world would become a place where life would be absolute hell, and I thought we must stop this." 32

Russell, like Gandhi, believed that nationalism was frequently the root cause of international conflict. In "An Appeal to the Intellectuals of Europe," written during the First World War, he noted the tendency of intellectuals "to provide their respective governments with those ingenious distortions and those subtle untruths by which it is made to appear that all good is on one side, and all wickedness on the other." In such periods, he said, "allegiance to country has swept away allegiance to truth."

The most harmful beliefs, Russell continued, are those which produce hatred of the enemy. "The fundamental irrational belief, on which all others rest, is the belief that the victory of one's own side is of enormous and indubitable importance, and even of such importance as to outweigh all of the evils in prolonging the war." He ends with the following appeal to his fellow intellectuals: "It is time to forget our supposed separate duty toward Germany, Austria, Russia, France, or England, and remember that higher duty to mankind in which we still can be at one."

Later in his life, Russell made a similar argument to support his call for the elimination of nuclear weapons:

Unfortunately, the fear generated by the existence of nuclear weapons is directed only against the 'enemy.' fear causes hate, the hate causes the belief that the other side is wholly wicked and our own side wholly good. These reactions, which are caused by the danger, immeasurably increase it.... So long as the attitude of rivalry between different groups persists, motives of pride and prestige make agreement almost impossible. If people could learn to view nuclear war as a common danger to our species, and not as a danger due solely to the wickedness of the opposing group, it would be possible to negotiate agreements which would put an end to the common danger. This demands a renunciation, or at least restraint, of passions which, though they have always been harmful, have only in recent years threatened utter and total disaster. Among such passions, perhaps the most important is nationalism, especially that of the most powerful countries. I do not mean to suggest that nationalism is wholly evil. It has two sides: love of one's own country, and hatred of other countries. One is good; the other is bad."37

V. Just War Theory

A. Introduction

Pacifism has always been a minority view. Very few people believe, like Hauerwas or Gandhi, that violence should always be renounced. As we have seen, even Bertrand Russell believed that some wars are morally justifiable. The vast majority of Americans supported U.S. participation in the Second World War. In comparison, U.S. military involvement in the Vietnam conflict did not have nearly this level of support.

Over the years, a tradition of thinking about the ethics of war has developed which attempts to define criteria to determine

when war is morally justifiable, and how it can morally be waged.

This has come to be known as "just war theory."

Just war theory has provided the framework for most contemporary discussions of the ethics of war. It has two components. The first concerns the reasons states have for fighting, and asks when it is morally defensible to engage in a war. The second considers how a war should be fought. Medieval writers called the former "jus ad bellum" (justice of war), and the latter "jus in bello" (justice in war).

It is important to note that these two components are logically independent. That is to say, it is possible for a just war to be fought unjustly, or for an unjust war to be fought justly.

It would be beyond the scope of this paper to survey the debate on just war theory in detail, but I would like at least to summarize the main issues.

B. "Jus ad Bellum" - When is it Moral to Engage in War?

The principal component of the theory of "jus ad bellum" is the requirement that war be fought for a <u>just cause</u>. Just war theorists are virtually unanimous that defense against an external attack provides a just cause for war, but there is

little agreement beyond that. Other candidates for just causes include defense of another state against unjust external aggression, defense of fundamental human rights, or the punishment of unjust aggressors.

In addition to just cause, a number of other components of "jus ad bellum" have been suggested. From the time of St.

Augustine, many theorists have argued that a just war can be conducted only by a legitimate authority. This raises the question, of course, of what constitutes legitimate authority. If only established states were deemed to be legitimate to initiate a war, then all civil wars and independence movements would be unjust by their nature (presumably including the one which resulted in the independence of the United States). Few just war theorists would go this far.

It has also been argued that a just war should be fought for a just intention - that is to say, for just goals. Of course, this only raises the question of what is a just goal.

Some also have proposed a rule of <u>proportionality</u> - that is, a war can not be just unless the evil that can reasonably be expected to ensue from the war is less than the evil that can reasonably be expected to ensue if the war is not fought.³⁸

Many other standards have been proposed to determine when a war is just. These include a requirement that a <u>public</u>

<u>declaration</u> of war be made, that war be pursued only as a <u>last</u>

<u>resort</u>, and that the war have a <u>reasonable likelihood of success</u>.

There are many others, as well.

C. "Jus in Bello" - How Should a War be Fought?

Most people who believe that there are moral limits defining when a war should be fought also believe that there are moral limits to define how they should be fought. Over the centuries, many rules for "jus in bello" have been proposed. Many have been codified in diplomatic treaties, conventions, and protocols, and ratified by most of the nations of the world.

The United States has ratified most of the principal international conventions regarding the laws of war. The U.S. armed services are bound, for example, by the Hague Conventions of 1899 and 1907, the Geneva conventions of 1929, and the four Geneva conventions of 1949, which govern the treatment of the sick and wounded on the battlefield, the sick and wounded at sea, prisoners of war, and the protection of civilians in time of war. 39

While these conventions cover the conduct of war in considerable detail, the theory of "jus in bello" consists principally of three requirements. The first is the requirement of necessity - that is, that military force should cause no more destruction than is necessary to achieve its objectives. This theory does not say that everything that is necessary is permissible, but rather that everything that is permissible must be necessary. The second requirement is proportionality - that the amount of destruction caused by the pursuit of a military objective must be proportionate to the importance of the objective. Another way to state this requirement is that the expected bad consequences of any given act of war must not outweigh its expected good consequences. The third requirement is discrimination. This requires that force should be directed only against legitimate targets of attack, and not against civilian (noncombatant) life and property.

VI. Where Do I Stand?

I should begin by explaining that I am not a Christian. I therefore feel unqualified to interpret the scriptures, or to respond to Hauerwas's arguments in favor of Christian pacifism.

I am deeply moved by Gandhi's philosophy of nonviolence. I agree with his view of humanity as a single family. I note that the Lord's Prayer, repeated by Christians around the globe every day, is addressed to "our Father." Wouldn't this make all of the people saying the prayer brothers and sisters?

I agree with Gandhi and Russell that nationalism and greed are the causes of most wars. Hauerwas, too, observed that "wars are seldom fought to protect the physical survival of a people, but rather for the achievement of this or that political advantage." Agrippa of Nettlesheim went so far as to characterize war as "nothing but a general homicide and robbery by mutual consent."

When we considered U.S. interests worldwide here at the War College last week, following our regional strategic appraisals, I was struck by how many of the interests which we identified were related to maintaining our national wealth. I do not consider economic interest to be a sufficient reason to go to war. Nor, in my view, should a desire to increase national territory serve as justification for war. I believe that states should renounce expansionist ambitions.

One of Russell's observations rang particularly true to me.

This was his connection of war with racism. Discourse in a

nation at war often includes racism directed at "the enemy."

This is wholly contrary to Gandhi's philosophy of a unified human family.

I wish I could endorse Gandhi's philosophy of nonviolence as a response to war. I can not, however. I do not share his belief that even the most hateful person would be impeded by the sight of innocent victims being slaughtered. I do not believe that his technique would have worked against Hitler, for example, or against Macias Nguema, the first President of Equatorial Guinea, who is said to have ordered his henchmen to drive tanks over innocent people in a soccer stadium for his amusement.

In the end, like Russell, I believe that some wars should be fought. But how are we to decide when? I believe that a country always has a right to defend itself after its territory has been invaded. Beyond that, each case needs to be considered on its individual merits.

I don't find just war theory to be very helpful. It only shifts the question, to, for example, what constitutes a "just cause." In each case, a careful consideration of costs and benefits is required. In making this calculation, however, I would assign a very high cost to the loss of even one human life.

As I noted above, I do not believe that economic benefits or territorial expansion should be used to justify war.

VII. A Lesson From Literature

In Act IV, Scene 4 of <u>Hamlet</u>, Hamlet encounters an expedition of Norwegians on their way to Poland. The Norwegian captain tells him:

We go to gain a little patch of ground That hath in it no profit but its name. To pay five ducats, five, I would not farm it; Nor will it yield to Norway or the Pole A ranker rate, should it be sold in fee.

Hamlet replies: "Why, then, the Polack will never defend it;" to which the Captain responds: "Yes, it is already garrisoned."

Hamlet answers:

Witness this army of such mass and charge
Led by a delicate and tender prince,
Whose spirit with divine ambition puff'd
Makes mouths at the invisible event,
Exposing what is mortal and unsure
To all that fortune, death and danger dare,
Even for an egg-shell. Rightly to be great
Is not to stir without great argument,
But greatly to find quarrel in a straw
When honour's at the stake ...
O, from this time forth,
My thoughts be bloody, or be nothing worth.

May we be wiser than Hamlet.

END NOTES

- ¹ All Scriptural citations in this paper are from the Oxford University Press edition of the Holy Bible (authorized King James edition).
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- ⁵ Ramsey, Paul, <u>Speak Up for Just War or Pacifism</u> (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1988), 160.
- ⁶ Yoder, John Howard, <u>The Original Revolution</u> (Scottdale, Pennsylvania: Herald Press, 1971), 29.
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- 9 Ibid.
- ¹⁰ Ibid., 198.
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- ¹² Mohandas K. Gandhi, <u>Non-Violent Resistance</u> (New York: Schocken Books, 1951), 6.
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- ¹⁷ Ibid., 120.
- ¹⁸ Ibid., 122.
- ¹⁹ Ibid., 123.
- ²⁰ Ibid., 122-23.
- ²¹ Ibid., 123.
- ²² Gandhi, <u>Non-Violent Resistance</u>, 386.
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- ²⁶ Ibid., 220-21.
- ²⁷ Bertrand Russell, <u>Bertrand Russell Speaks His Mind</u> (Cleveland, Ohio: The World Publishing Co., 1960), 35.
- 28 Ibid.
- ²⁹ Ibid., 41.
- 30 Ibid., 38.
- Paul Edwards, William P. Alston, and A. N. Prior, "Bertrand Arthur William Russell," in Paul Edwards, ed. in chief, <u>The Encyclopedia of Philosophy</u> (New York: The Macmillan Company and The Free Press, 1967), 235-258.

- 32 Bertrand Russell, <u>Bertrand Russell Speaks His Mind</u>, 38.
- ³³ Bertrand Russell, "An Appeal to the Intellectuals of Europe," contained in Robert N. Beck and John B. Orr, <u>Ethical Choice</u> (New York, The Free Press, 1970), 390-91.
- ³⁴ Ibid., 391.
- ³⁵ Ibid., 394-95.
- ³⁶ ibid., 398.
- ³⁷ Bertrand Russell, <u>Unarmed Victory</u> (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1963), 117.
- Douglas P. Lackey, <u>The Ethics of War and Peace</u> (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1989), 40.
- ³⁹ Ibid., 59.
- 40 Hauerwas, Against All Nations, 187.
- ⁴¹ Bainton, <u>Christian Attitudes Toward War and Peace</u>, 130.

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